(d) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Export Promotion Board will take dcisions on all export related issues with the basic objective of enhancing the rate of growth of Indian exports. It would recommend steps to resolve inter-Ministerial differences on policy interpretration and implementation. It would also look into problems relating to infrastrucutre, non-tariff barriers, export competitiveness, procedures relating to export activity, with a view to recommending new steps for diversifying India's export basket and to enable higher export realization.

The Board would be chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, and would include Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, Finance Secretary, Secretary, Ministry of Textiles, Secretary, Ministry of Surface Transport, Secretary, Department of Electronics, Secretary Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Secretary, Department of Revenue and Secretary, Department of Civil Aviation. The EPB would be serviced by the Ministry of Commerce.

(c) Export-Import statistics of grapes for the last three months of the current year are not available. However, according to trade sources, exports of fresh grapes during the current year have exceeded the exports made during the corresponding period of the previous year. Under the current Export-Import Policy, imports of grapes are restricted.

(d) Does not arise.

Discrimination in import duty on U.K. and other European countries against Grapes

667. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM:
SHRI MUKESH R. PATEL:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is discrimination in import duty of U.K. and other European countries, whereby Indian grape exporters have to pay 18% import duty, while grape-growers from Chile and Israel have to pay only 3%; and

(b) if so, what steps Government have initiated to remove such discrimination and save the interest of grape-giowers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) There is no separate country-specific duty regime imposed by the European Union (EU) as the duties are required to be livied on 'Most Favoured Nation' (MFN) basis. However, in derogation of MFN duties, EU grants concessional treatment under the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) to various developing countries. India is also one of the beneficiaries. The import duty on Indian grapses has been reduced from 18% to 15% by the EU during the crop season, 1997. Under the EU GSP Scheme, exports from least developed countries and some other countries facing special problems enjoy greater concessions than India.

(b) India has requested European Union for better GSP treatment.

Steamlining the issues hindering promotion of exports

668. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government propose to slreamiline and sort out issues' hindering promotion of exports from the country;

(b) whether this exercise is being done on the basis of general drop in the export targets during the last two years or any special study has been made to evolve a well structured regulatory measure towards achieving higher export targets;

(c) whether any area has been identified where export promotion efforts need a sustained campaign; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA

BULI RAMAIAH): (a) and (b) Export promotion is a continuous and sustained process and steps are continuously being taken by the Government to promote exprots through policy and promotional measures. The export growth rate during 1995-96 was 20.8% and satisfactory. Only during 1996-97 the rate of growth was 4.1 % which was below the target. This was due to many factors international as well as domestic. The new Exim Policy 1997-2002 has been formulated with a view to carrying forward the process of dismantling and rationalising regulatory policies which hindered promotion of exports. Efforts are being made to simplify/ reduce procedures and to create a hastle free environment for the exprting community. Based on interaction with trade and industry, steps are being taken to improve export growth.

(c) and (d) As a part of export promotion strategy, it has been decided to set up an Export Promotion Board under the Chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary to address inter-ministerial issues and resolve the same. This effort is expected to remove the irritants to exports and to put exports on a high growth path. Regular meetings are being held with various export promotion councils, commodity boards, trade and industry to evolve measures to achieve a high growth for exports. A medium term strategy is being drawn up based on analysis of data and interaction with trade and industry.

Import of Rice

669. DR. MOHAN BABU : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to import rice as reported in the 'Hindustan Times' dated 30.5.97;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) remedial steps taken to boost production of rice?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BAULI RAMAIAH) : (a) and (b) Import of common/coarse varieties of rice and rice with 50% or more broken has been permitted freely after review of the emerging trends in supply and stock of rice by the Government with effect from 27.5.97.

(c) Some of the measures taken to increase production and productivity of rice are the implementation of the following Centrally Sponsored/Central Sector schemes:—

(1) Integrated Cereals Development Programme in Rice Based Cropping System Areas (ICDP-Rice)-assistance is being provided to the farmers for the use of certified seeds of high yielding varities and improved farm implements including sprinkler sets and power tillers. Besides, assistance is also provided for encouraging the use of green manure and soil ameliorants.

(2) Central Sector Rice Seed Minikit Programme including propagation of improved crop production technology—seed minikits of Rice are provided to the farmers at nominal cost for propagation of new varities with biotic and abiotic resistance and also for organising trainings by the Agricultural Universities/ICAR Reasearch Institutions to the State/District Level Agriculture Officers for dissemination of improved crop production technology.

Setting up of High Powered Export Promotion Board to promote Exports

670. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether country's export performance during the past few months have fallen considerably;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Prime Minister has ordered setting up of a High Powered Export Promotion Board to resolve Inter-Ministerial problems related to export sector;

(d) if so, the details of problems faced by exporters; and

(e) to what extent the recent steps of Government will boost export performance?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA